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When Sparks Fly!

by Rev. Kim Wood, Conference Minister

But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I noticed that power had gone out from me." Luke 8:46, NRSVUE

The recounting of the woman who reached out to touch Jesus' cloak in order to be healed is one of my favorite stories in the Bible. Found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it tells a woman who, for twelve years, had been "suffering from a flow of blood for twelve years." Scripture tells us that she had "endured much under many physicians and had spent all that she had" to find relief from her ailment. To say that she was frustrated and exhausted and desperate is probably an understatement. Many people would have given up, but faith led her in a different direction. She headed off to find Jesus.



Somehow, on that day when the crowd was pushing in on Jesus from all sides and this ailing woman was being jostled to and fro as she tried to get close enough to make some physical connection with Jesus, a miracle happened. The woman's fingers grazed the fabric of Jesus' clothing and energy flowed from Jesus to her. Jesus felt it. She felt it. Sparks flew!

This unnamed woman had borne so much agony. She had gone through so much. But, somewhere along the way, she had encountered Jesus. Maybe she had encountered him talking to a group of people. Or maybe someone else had told her about Jesus and his teachings. Or maybe she happened to be nearby as he and the disciples were walking through town that day and she just knew that she was in the presence of the Messiah, the one sent by

God. Whatever it was, this woman's interaction with Jesus, anonymous as it was meant to be and quick as it was, changed her life forever.

Sometimes, I think that we get caught up in the checkpoints of ministry. Is it big enough? Is it bold enough? Is it flashy enough? Will it make a broad enough impact? In doing so, we often lose sight of the sparks that can fly in the simple connections we make with people as we share our stories, take a little time, and live out our own faith. I think about the time when my Lyft driver had received some difficult news that day and was able to let out a little of her angst on the trip from the hotel to the airport. Or the time when I saw a man stop to talk with a couple holding a sign asking for assistance as he prepared to enter the drive-thru of a restaurant who then circled back around the building to hand them a bag of food. Or the person working the admitting desk in an Emergency Room who took the time to go comfort a young woman whose parent had been brought by ambulance and was waiting for news. None of these acts played to the crowds or brought in the masses or filled the coffers. But they made a difference. For a moment, a connection was made. Sparks flew!

This ministry to which we are called as Jesus followers takes on many shapes and sizes. There are times when we're needed to be part of something big, something that takes a lot of people putting in an effort together to make ministry happen. But more times than we realize, ministry happens in little ways as we take to heart our commitment to live as God has called us to do in the way of Jesus. That, my friends, is when the sparks fly, just enough that someone else experiences the life-changing love of God. How amazing it is when we allow God to work with us and through us that someone else might experience wholeness and healing!

News from the Conference Office

Where's the Conference Staff?

Can you find the Southeast Conference staff? Take a moment to catch some of the highlights of where we've been and where we're going.

Recently

- September 17 – Rev. Wood worshiped Holy Trinity Community Church in Nashville.
- September 18-19 – Rev. Wood participated in the PATHWAYS Board Retreat in Atlanta.

- September 24 – Rev Wood worshiped with Trinity Congregational United Church of Christ in Athens, AL.

Looking Ahead

- October 8-11 – Rev. Wood will be at the Retired Servants Retreat, held in partnership annually with the Southern Conference, UCC at Blowing Rock Conference Center in Blowing Rock, NC.
- October 12-15 – Rev. Wood to attend the Florida Conference Annual Gathering in Orlando.
- October 19-22 – Rev. Wood will attend the United Church of Christ Board of Directors Meeting and the Service of Installation of Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson as General Minister and President of the UCC, both to be held in Cleveland, OH.
- October 22 – Rev. Fosburgh will celebrate with RIM Fellowship UCC in Atlanta for their 15th Anniversary.
- October 29 – Rev. Wood will worship with Bethany Congregational UCC and Evergreen Congregational UCC Churches in Thomasville, GA.
- November 2-7 – Rev. Wood Vacation
- November 11-13 – Rev. Wood will visit Pleasant Hill Community Church and Uplands Village.
- November 28-December 1 – Rev. Fosburgh will gather with the Alliance of Associate Conference Ministers for their retreat in Phoenix, AZ.
- November 30 – Rev. Wood will lead training program at Back Bay Mission.
- December 11-15 – Rev. Wood to attend the UCC Council of Conference Ministers Annual Retreat in Tuscon, AZ.

Harp Meditations Resume This Fall

We have taken the summer off, but join us on Zoom the third Thursday of each month at 1:00 PM Eastern/12:00 PM Central for 20 minutes of harp meditation. We will also have time for silent prayer and reflection if desired. Facilitated by Rev. Jean Norton (Vanderkamp).

Register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83985842108?pwd=R3JtcnErRzc0ZnQwOVBKajkrbDVRQT09>

Requests for Therapeutic Harp Sessions can be scheduled through www.HeartSongAwakenings.com.

This Month in SEC History: October 1979

by Mike Stroud

Women in the church have recently gotten an amazing, and long overdue, amount of attention. But as recently as 50 or so years ago, during an attempt to overcome a division in traditional gender-segregated auxiliaries on the national level, there was no Conference-wide mechanism for women to share fellowship and common concerns. Until 1979.

In October of that year, a meeting of women from the four contiguous UCC conferences in the Southeast U.S. took place at a Disciples of Christ campground near Nashville. Leaders included UCC historian Barbara Brown Zikmund, two representatives of national agencies, and a stalwart of the Conference even to this day, the Rev. Joyce Myers-Brown, acting in her capacity as the regional director for the UCC Office for Church Life and Leadership.



It became the start of a tradition that extended for well over 30 years, eventually becoming an event alternating years with a Southeast Conference-only gathering. Both types would deal not only more traditional "spiritual" concerns of a devotional nature, but would at times deal head-on with issues such as domestic violence, the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, sexism in society and church, and use of inclusive language by the church. All in all, the gatherings, held around the territory of the four conferences and within the SEC itself, presented a more challenging, yet equally warm and loving time for renewal for hundreds of the Conference's women over many years.

The November 1979 *Southeast News* reported that the inaugural meeting featured "numerous workshops, sharing in small groups, role playing, singing, and finally meeting in conferences to plan for action back home. The meeting closed with celebration and communion."

For about thirty years, the women's regional and Conference-wide meetings were a much-anticipated part of the church calendar, leaving fond memories and a determination to serve God in local communities.



Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2023. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of October 1

- Holy Trinity Community Church; Nashville, Tennessee
- Martha Sue Carter
- Joseph Ingle
- Kenneth Samuel
- Clarice Mitchell
- Jane Acuff

Week of October 8

- Peace Congregational UCC; Clemson, South Carolina
- Retired Servants Event; Blowing Rock Conference Center
- Jennifer Sanders
- Lyle Weible
- Nancy Elsenheimer
- Salome As-Salaam

Holding in Prayer

Please pray for Rev. Henrietta Andrews and her family in the death of her daughter Catherine B. Andrews.

Churches in Transition

First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville TN; Deer Lodge Congregational Church, Deer Lodge TN; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA; First Congregational Christian, Montgomery AL; Howard Congregational, Nashville TN; Community Congregational, Montgomery AL; Tuscaloosa UCC, Tuscaloosa AL.

News from the National Setting



Stewardship Theme Materials for 2023

"Because of You, Our Church Changes Lives"

This year's stewardship theme makes the connection between donor generosity and the ministry and mission of your congregation.

Our stewardship materials this year include eight complete worship services, hymn suggestions, sermon starters from eight authors, and faith formation sessions for children, youth, and adults. Materials also provide assets such as logos, commitment cards, bulletin inserts, and letters, plus guidance for your campaign.



Training Opportunities and Conferences

Collective Healing Trauma Retreat for African American Women

The Shalom Spiritual Center is pleased to announce its 1st annual Collective Healing Trauma Retreat on November 4th from 9 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. at Central Congregation United Church of Christ at 2676 Clairmont Rd, Atlanta, GA.

The retreat will explore how our bodies respond to the scars of

unprocessed trauma and how trauma's spiritual wounds manifest from one generation to the next. We will utilize a group-based process for discerning and reducing trauma energy, providing participants with the skills necessary to facilitate integration and eventual healing.

The retreat is designed for African American women who are survivors of institutional, racial, and sexual trauma.

If you are interested in participating in this retreat, please contact Rev. Salome As-Salaam at salome@shalom-centers.org or (404)-780-4275.

Additional details will be provided on our website, shalom-centers.org.



PATHWAYS
THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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PATHWAYS Theological Education, Inc., invites you to consider its Progressive Christian theological education courses. PATHWAYS exists to offer a range of stimulating, accessible, and affordable online progressive Christian resources for church leaders, faith explorers, pastors, and those discerning various vocations and callings within and outside the church community. In PATHWAYS online courses, the class size is small! (pathwaystheological.org/)

PATHWAYS courses are affordable, asynchronous, and completely online to fit the schedules of busy people! Each course offers participants the opportunity to develop competency in the subject matter as well as the chance to meet and work with a diverse group from across the United States. The learners build community through online respectful course-work discussions with one another and with the facilitator.

Register now for the Fall II courses. The registration process is easy and remains open through the first day of class. If you have questions, please contact us through the [website](http://pathwaystheological.org/).

Fall II: *6-week upcoming courses beginning October 9, 2023*

- Understanding the Bible as a Progressive Christian (Foundational Level) [Find out more>>](#)
- Stories of Christian Saints and Sinners (Foundational Level) [Find out more >>](#)
- Old Testament Hermeneutics (Applied Level) [Find out more >>](#)
- Practicing our Faith in the Public Square (Integrated Level) [Find out more >>](#)
- Ecological Theology (Integrated Level) [Find out more >>](#)

If you are discerning a call to ministry, interested in deepening your journey in Christian discipleship, or want to explore your faith questions and doubts, PATHWAYS Theological Education, Inc. is the right place! You may apply [here](#).

Helpful PATHWAYS Website Addresses:

- Website: <https://www.pathwaystheological.org/>
- Contact us: <https://www.pathwaystheological.org/index.php/contact-us>
- Course Schedule: <https://www.pathwaystheological.org/index.php/programs/course-schedule>
- Ministry Preparation: <https://www.pathwaystheological.org/index.php/programs/ministry-preparation>
- Apply: <https://www.pathwaystheological.org/index.php/admissions>



Winter Youth Retreat at Blowing Rock Conference Center

Our friends from Alethea will be joining us for a weekend of storytelling, experiential education, service, and of course fun in the snow on January

12-15, 2024. Registration is now open! Join youth from across the Southeast for a fun experience designed to fuel their faith. Group Leaders, please [click here to register your full group](#). Registration is open until December 1, 2023, and is \$208.00 per participant. (Includes lodging, programming, and meals.)



A PLEA FROM THE POPE

A FREE WEBINAR
OCTOBER 11TH AT 1 PM ET

**ADDRESSING
CLIMATE AND INEQUALITY
WITH MORAL URGENCY AND FAITH**

UCC Webinar— A Plea from the Pope

As the feast day of Francis of Assisi is celebrated on October 4th, Pope Francis will release the "second part" of his encyclical on the climate crisis and inequality. The new edition of the encyclical will provide an update to confronting "the senseless war on our common home." A panel of climate faith leaders will reflect upon Pope Francis's plea for climate action. Even if you cannot make the webinar at its scheduled time on October 11 at 1 pm ET, still sign-up, and we will send you a link to a recording of it. [Register now!](#)

Conference Calendar

October 3 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

October 9 - October 11

[Retired Servants Retreat](#)

October 10 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

October 12 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT

[Board of Directors Meeting](#)

October 17 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

October 19 @ 1:00 pm - 1:30 pm EDT

[Live Harp Meditations for Ministers](#)

October 24 @ 9:30 am - 11:00 am EDT

[Zoom Conversation for Specialized Ministers](#)

October 24 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

October 31 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

November 3 - November 4

[Healthy Boundaries 101: Fundamentals](#)

View the full calendar of events online: <https://www.secucc.org/events/>

Contact Us

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Assoc. Conf. Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh**; hfosburgh@secucc.org

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